

somebody like Ahmadi-Nejad—was a startling failure of leadership at the university by the president of the university.

As an alumni, I was embarrassed, to put it quite simply. I was embarrassed by the fact that they would choose to give this individual such a forum, this individual who will probably, for my children, my children's children, and maybe even our generation, be the most significant threat to world peace that we have as soon as he develops his nuclear weapon, which he is on course to do, and then to compound that by setting up the forum in a way where the president of the university basically went way beyond what would be considered to be a coherent and thoughtful and balanced approach to addressing this individual. It would have been much more effective had the president of the university simply allowed the President of Iran to make his statement and, by his own statement, indict himself because that is exactly what he would have done, and he did. But, unfortunately, rather than the President of Iran becoming the issue, which he should be, the president of the university made himself part of the story and the issue.

It was not a good day for Columbia or for alumni of Columbia, in my humble opinion, and it speaks volumes about the level to which the universities in our country, especially those which proclaim themselves elite, have sunk in the area of setting up open and free dialog because, as I said, as has been seen in various universities across this country, conservative thought would not have been given the type of forum this militaristic individual, whose purpose it is to essentially destabilize the world through the use of nuclear weapons, was given. Others would not be given such a forum.

So it is with regret that I rise today to ask why—again, why—why did Columbia pursue this course and why did the president of the university pursue the course he pursued in responding to the attendance of the President of Iran on his campus?

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business be extended to 11:45 a.m. today under the same conditions and limitations as previously ordered.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REAUTHORIZATION OF CHIL- DREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a very impor-

tant and very positive issue we are going to be addressing and sending to the President this week; that is, the reauthorization of the children's health care program. This is really a historic, bipartisan effort that has been put together, and it is something we have done together for all of our families and children across America.

We urgently need to pass this bill in its final form and send it to the President of the United States. I know the House of Representatives is doing that today, and it will then come to us. There is no question that it is one of the most important things we will do this year, not only guaranteeing that some 6 million children who currently receive this children's health care program will be able to continue to get health care, but we will be expanding upwards of another 4 million children who will be able to have the health care they need and deserve.

I wish to particularly thank leaders on the Finance Committee, including Senator BAUCUS, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator ROCKEFELLER, and Senator HATCH, for working together in such a wonderful way that has given us the opportunity in the Senate to come together, with the original vote on the bill being 68 Members of the Senate—68 Members of the Senate. In addition to that, we are so thrilled to have Senator JOHNSON back with us so that his vote will be added as well to this very important program.

I also thank our leader, Senator HARRY REID, for making this a top priority and for personally engaging in the negotiations that took place to be able to get us to the point where we have something on which we can move forward in the House and the Senate in a bipartisan way.

This really builds on the bipartisan spirit that created the whole program in 1997. I was in the U.S. House of Representatives representing mid-Michigan at the time and felt that as we put this program together then, it was an incredibly important statement of our values and our priorities. We are talking about working families, moms and dads who go to work every day to maybe one, two, or three jobs who are trying to hold things together and desperately want to make sure their children have the health care they need. That is what this legislation is all about. That is what this program is all about.

Among many good things that have been placed into this bipartisan legislation, I am very proud to say that it makes important improvements in dental care and in mental health care for children. It looks at quality issues and health information technology. I am very pleased that language which I authored concerning creating an electronic medical record for children, a pediatric electronic medical record, is in this legislation so that we can bring children's information together around immunizations and other kinds of health care needs in one place so we

can more effectively have them treated and have doctors and hospitals knowing what, in fact, a child's medical record is. I am also very pleased about another piece of the legislation I worked on in relation to school-based health centers and the importance of recognizing them as part of a continuum of care for children.

This bill really does represent a very successful public sector and private sector partnership that helps our families and makes sure more children, children of working families, are able to get health care in this country. In my State of Michigan, a private insurer runs what we call the MICHild Program. Last year, nearly one-third of the children in Michigan relied on either Healthy Kids through Medicaid for low-income children or MICHild, which represents working families, for health care coverage. About three-quarters of the children have at least one working parent. I must say that oftentimes that is mom—mom trying to, again, work one job or two jobs or three jobs, desperately concerned about her children, needing to put food on the table, needing to buy them school clothes, needing to get them what they need to be able to survive and function every day, and knowing that when they desperately need to go to the dentist, they are able to get a dental checkup, or to be able to get basic kinds of health care.

I know too many people who tell me they go to bed at night saying: Please, God, don't let the kids get sick. This program in Michigan, MICHild, and this program which we are now coming together on a bipartisan basis to expand says to those parents: Somebody is hearing you; that we as a country and as a Congress care about the children of this country and making sure they have their health care needs met.

It is so important to stress that this is not a program for wealthy families, for rich kids. We have heard so much misinformation about what this program is all about. In Michigan, a family of four cannot make over \$40,000 to qualify for MICHild. This is, again, a family of four. If there are two working parents, working just barely above poverty level, this allows them to be able to get the health insurance they need for their children.

The Saginaw-based Center for Civil Justice shared a story with me about a young mother named Christie whose husband was laid off and the family income dropped to less than \$2,000 a month for a family of five—less than \$24,000 a year for a family of five. Nearly half of that goes to rent and utilities, like most families. The children's health care program in Michigan, MICHild, has helped their three children, who are 4 years old, 3 years old, and 8 months. Thankfully, they have been able to—in Michigan, we have had a dental benefit, which is something we are going to provide through this bill. Without that, Christie's children would not have what they need.